



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 15, 2006

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to thank the Secretary General, the Gender Section, and all those in the various OSCE structures who contributed to the report we have before us.

This is the first annual discussion of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. We strongly supported having this discussion here in the PC to ensure that this subject receives adequate political attention.

There are many positive developments noted in the report. The number of women employed by the OSCE has increased -- albeit slightly. We need to continue to make progress on this, especially in the appointment of qualified women to higher-level posts.

The process of "gender mainstreaming," as it called - that is, making sure that in planning all OSCE activities, a gender perspective is considered - seems to be underway with the support of the Gender Section. Certainly, as the report suggests, further training and assistance, such as checklists and guidelines, will help to move this work forward.

We support plans to continue to develop training materials, to integrate a gender perspective in the General Orientation program, and to develop specific training modules for the CPC's border team on gender issues, trafficking in human beings, and violence against women.

We also are very pleased to hear that the Policy against Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination has been revised as tasked by the Action Plan. Our delegation would appreciate if this new policy could be circulated to all delegations.

It is crucial that the OSCE ensure its own house is in order as it assists participating States to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

In this regard, the role of senior management is crucial. This should be an immediate priority. Senior management must be trained and held accountable for the implementation of directives such as the policy against harassment I mentioned before, as well as Staff Instruction 11/2004, which specifically refers to trafficking in persons. We are particularly glad to see that training will be provided during the annual Heads of Mission meeting. All heads of Missions should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this regard.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation would like to make two comments on the report in general. First, I would note that while we appreciated the list of gender projects being conducted in the field missions, we should not link the presence of a field mission to a lack of equality of opportunity between women and men in the host country. Our missions provide a convenient framework and platform for such projects in the countries where missions exist. But we should also look at ways to provide OSCE assistance where it is needed in countries that do not have field missions.

I would also like to note that while we agree trafficking in human beings does have a gender component, it is not a gender-related issue per se. Traffickers prey on people who are vulnerable for purposes of labor and sexual exploitation, whether women, men, girls, or boys. Indeed, traffickers themselves are both male and female.

Again, I would like to thank all those involved in preparing this first annual report. We would appreciate regular updates on how training is progressing, particularly as concerns senior management.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.